

Reuben Shapley House
420 Court Street
Portsmouth
Rockingham County
New Hampshire

HABS No. NH-104

HABS
NH,
8-PORT,
134-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

REUBEN SHAPLEY HOUSE

HABS No. NH-104

Location: 420 Court Street, Portsmouth, Rockingham County, New Hampshire.

Present Owner: Portsmouth Housing Authority. (1963)

Present Occupant: Vacant, to be restored by Strawberry Banke, Inc.

Present Use: Vacant.

Significance: Built by Captain Reuben Shapley in 1816 for investment. Occupied by Wid. Sarah Stoodley, Captain Josiah Knowlton, his son Captain Joseph Knowlton, Hon. James Bartlett, William Horn (fish peddler), and Charles A. Brewster.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1816, after Great Fire of 1813.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners:

Captain Reuben Shapley, the original owner, lived in a handsome mansion just east of this house. The Knowltons, father and son, were sea-going men and lived here for 30 years. Hon. James Bartlett was a prominent business man.

4. Builder, suppliers: Not known.
5. Original plans and construction: Not extant.

Wooden frame house, two-stories with hip roof. Originally clapboarded. There seem to be no later additions to the house as constructed in 1816, except a lean-to garage.

B. Historical Context:

There is no historical significance to this small dwelling, but it is typical of the modest homes occupied by sea-going men and their families. Captain Reuben Shapley was a wealthy merchant, member of the Federal Fire Society, devoted Episcopalian, who donated a silver chalice to St. John's Episcopal Church (still in use). He built a number of houses for investment and this was one of them. He died in 1825 and by 1830 his widow was offering it for sale.

PART II. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Secondary and published sources:

New Hampshire Oracle, September 21, 1816. "New House, corner of Pitt and Atkinson Street, for Rent" Inquire of the Printer.

New Hampshire Gazette, March 2, 1830. "VALUABLE REAL ESTATE FOR SALE....Large commodious mansion house of late Reuben Shapley... ALSO A convenient 2 story house, situated on corner of Pitt and Atkinson Streets, now occupied by Mrs. Stoodley"

B. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated:

Further study of Probate Records at County court house, Exeter, New Hampshire

Vital records at City Hall Portsmouth. Genealogies of Shapley, Bartlett, Knowlton, Horn and Brewster families.

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